

Massachusetts State Defense Force Fact Sheet

-- The Massachusetts State Defense Force (MSDF) is focused on contributing to the Commonwealth's resiliency. The MSDF provides respected, relevant, ready, and reliable support and augmentation of Massachusetts National Guard operations and staff by leveraging the significant experience and professional competencies of Massachusetts civilian volunteers and former/retired members of the U.S. Armed Forces and/or the Military Forces of the Commonwealth.

-- The MSDF concentrates recruiting on those with key professional competencies in order to provide the best possible assistance to the Commonwealth during homeland security and emergency management operations. The targeted membership demographic includes former/retired military operations and logistics professionals as well as skilled medical professionals, legal professionals, and ordained, ecclesiastically endorsed clergypersons.

-- The MSDF is authorized by Massachusetts General Laws ch. 33 § 10 and was previously organized as the Massachusetts State Guard.

-- A Massachusetts State Guard medical unit with relief supplies was among the first to arrive in Halifax, Nova Scotia after a devastating explosion leveled the city in December, 1917. In gratitude, the Province of Nova Scotia sends one of its largest trees to Boston every Christmas season for display on Boston Common.

-- Massachusetts State Guard medical units operated nine large hospitals which treated civilians during the flu pandemic in 1918.

-- The Massachusetts State Guard maintained law and order during the Boston Police Strike from September through December of 1918.

-- During World War II, the Massachusetts State Guard fielded a light infantry division with the mission of defending the state from enemy attack and conducted pre-basic training for thousands of young men preparing to enter the Army.

-- The first large-scale opportunity for women to enter military service in New England was the Women's Defense Corps (WDC), an element of the Massachusetts State Guard. The WDC provided important administrative, medical, communications, and transportation support.

-- The Massachusetts State Guard organized a fulltime quick reaction force designated as the "Flying Column" which was prepared for any emergency.

--During the Vietnam War, the Massachusetts State Guard was reorganized to take the place of the 26th Infantry Division, Massachusetts National Guard if it had been mobilized.